

## Therapy Dog Visit Pilot Project EPA Region 8

**What:** Scheduled “Dog Days” where a registered therapy dog team will visit employees at the Wynkoop facility. No more than one registered team at a time will visit the facility.

**Why:** Dogs excel as therapeutic agents. Studies have shown a decrease in both blood pressure and stress levels during therapy dog visits. A visit from a therapy dog team can increase overall emotional well-being and stimulate the mind in dramatic ways. Registered therapy dogs offer various benefits to people in the workplace, including:

- Bringing joy and laughter
- Taking a person’s mind off of problems and worries
- Getting people to share their emotions and stories
- Giving a chance for people to communicate with others
- Lowering stress levels and blood pressure

### Extensive Testing

- A pilot involving registered therapy dogs means that the dogs visiting EPA have undergone extensive testing to make sure that they have good manners and react positively to being touched by strangers. Accredited therapy dog organizations include Pet Partners, Alliance for Therapy Dogs, and Therapy Dogs International.

### Clean, Groomed & Healthy

- Registered therapy dogs are required to be cleaned and groomed before visits, up-to-date on rabies vaccines and other inoculations recommended by their personal veterinarians.

### Covered by Insurance

- Participating therapy dog volunteer teams are covered by therapy organizations’ insurance in the unlikely event someone is injured as a result of interacting with the therapy dog.

## Region 8 Therapy Dog Visit Guidelines

- **Items required on visits:** Dog handlers must carry a current therapy dog organization membership card, and dogs must wear identification tag on the collar, harness, or leash. Handlers must have written proof of their dog's vaccinations readily available at each visit, either carried with them, or available upon request.
- **Behavior of dogs:** Dogs must remain under control at all times. Any inappropriate behaviors must be quickly and quietly corrected: barks should be quieted; and jumping/pawing dogs should be quickly moved away while apologizing and checking to see if the person is OK. If not quickly corrected, the team must leave the property.
- **Ask before entering:** Always ask before bringing your dog up to a person for visiting. If you are entering a room, make sure everyone in the room wishes to have the dog visit. If one person does **not** want a visit, ask that person if it is OK to visit with others in the room. If not, do not enter the room.
- **Walking the dog in the facility:** Dogs may not precede handlers down halls, around comers, at doorways or at stairways. Stand back while waiting for an elevator door to open. When the door opens, wait to assure safe exit of passengers. If the elevator is occupied, the handler must ask permission to enter with the dog.
- **Dog Grooming Requirements:** Participating dogs must be clean and well groomed, have trimmed/filed nails, clean teeth, be free of internal and external parasites, and in good general health. If used, topical flea and tick preventative must be applied a minimum of three days prior to visit.
- **Prohibited equipment:** Equipment that is not allowed includes retractable, elastic/bungee or chain leashes, pinch, prong, spiked or electronic collars. Collars, including slip, buckle, quick release, martingale, limited slip or any other smooth collars made of chain, nylon or leather are acceptable. Leashes must be 4 feet in length or shorter and made of material strong enough for the size/strength of the dog. Head halters and body halters/harnesses made of fabric webbing or leather with metal or plastic buckles are acceptable.
- **Only handlers may handle their dogs:** Handlers must never leave their dogs alone with others.
- **Incident or Injury:** If an incident or injury to an employee occurs: 1) Immediately contact the facility's safety officer on duty; 2) If the incident is a suspected bite, end the visit immediately; 3) Document the incident on all required forms for the facility; 4) Contact therapy organization per required protocol to report the incident.